

Lawson for his dedication to his family and his country.

COME AND TAKE IT: GONZALES,
TEXAS, 1835

HON. TED POE

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, October 12, 2018

Mr. POE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, the phrase “Come and Take It” is known and cherished by all Texans. You’ll see it emblazoned on t-shirts, bumper stickers, and glassware, and some businesses and organizations have adapted it to fit into their mottos and slogans.

But these four words were not the creation of an advertising firm or a campaign communications shop. No, this phrase comes from a critical chapter in the history of Texas.

The year was 1835. Independence from Mexico was on the mind of Texans, and discussions had already begun to create a new nation free from the tyrannical government of Santa Anna in Mexico City. Santa Anna’s government had begun to trample on the rights of Texans, who then became resolved to stand up to him.

An opportunity presented itself in October 1835 when a band of Mexican soldiers under

the command of Fernando Castaneda were dispatched to Gonzales. The Mexican government had been informed that the settlers there were refusing to give up a cannon given to the town to defend the settlers from Indian attacks. The settlers responded to requests to return the cannon to the Mexican army with strong words that only a Texian would utter: “come and take it.” So Domingo de Ugartechea, military commander of Texas, believing the settlers words were bluster, ordered Castaneda and his men to retrieve it.

Well, Santa Anna never did learn the lessons of history. If he had, he might have remembered that things did not go well for King George when he tried to disarm the colonists in Massachusetts and he maybe would have thought twice about marching his henchman up to Texas.

When Castaneda arrived at Gonzales, he found his path blocked by a ford and eighteen determined militiamen. Attempting to trick his way past the guards, he declared that he had a message for Andrew Ponton, the local alcalde. The militiamen informed him that Ponton was not in Gonzales and would have to wait on the other side of the river until he returned. As the Mexican troops set up camp, the Texans scrambled to alert the surrounding area and bring more volunteers into the town to defend it from an impending Mexican attack.

The militiamen, who came to be known as the Old Eighteen, bought valuable time for the town and for Texas. Indeed, the presence of incoming volunteers forced Castaneda to abandon his campsite at the river and move seven miles to the west. Bolstered with reinforcements and a growing confidence, the Texans under the command of John Moore found the Mexican camp and attacked. Stunned and outgunned, Castaneda ordered a withdrawal to Bexar, thus marking the first victory won against Mexico in the fight for independence.

It was during this battle that the phrase “Come and Take It” took on its significance. During the battle, the Texans marched under a new flag that featured the Lone Star, a cannon representing the one under guard in Gonzales, and the words “Come and Take It.” Today, Texans take pride in this enduring symbol of the Texan spirit, and if you happen to walk past my office window in Washington, you will see this flag proudly displayed next to the Lone Star flag.

Mr. Speaker, in Texas, we have a long tradition of fighting against oppression and tyranny. So when our enemies come knocking on our doors again threatening our freedom, let them remember these words: Come and Take It.

And that is just the way it is.